

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TAGS: SHUM, CM

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: (A) STATE 147628 (B) YAOUNDE 2720 (C) STATE 139160

1. SUMMARY: THERE HAVE BEEN NUMBER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH INDICATE GURC CONCERN AND WILLINGNESS DISCUSS MATTERS IN NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLIC MEETINGS. MATTERS REPORTED ON INCLUDE PRISON CONDITIONS, APPEAL PROCEDURES, AND DETENTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. ON MARCH 23, 1977, A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN THE CAMEROON TRIBUNE REPORTED A JOINT FUND RAISING EFFORT BY THE CAMEROONIAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PARISHES FOR AID TO PRISONERS. CASH CONTRIBUTIONS AND SIZEABLE DONATIONS OF FOOD AND CLOTHING WERE DISTRIBUTED IN THE SOUTH WEST AND NORTH WEST PROVINCES. THE ARTICLE FRANKOY STATED THAT THE CHURCH "WAS MOVED TO THIS ACTION AFTER PERSISTENT SAD REPORTS OF THE MISERABLE CONDITIONS OF PRISONERS PLACED ON SINGLED 30 FRANCS CFA (ABOUT 12 CENTS) MEALS A DAY AND IN SOME PLACES WITHOUT ADEQUATE CLOTHING AND COVERING FOR THE NIGHT EVEN FOR THOSE IN COLD REGIONS." THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES THAT "THE HELP PROVIDED BY THE CHRISTIANS

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IS VERY MEAGRE (SIC) WHEN COMPARED TO THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM. NEVERTHELESS, THEY HAVE TO START IN A VERY PRACTICAL WAY BY SAVING THE DYING PRISONER."

3. THE OFFICIAL NEWS BULLETIN, ACAP, REPORTED ON APRIL 16 MEETING OF THE SOUS-PREFETS OF FOUMBAN AND BOUMBOT AND THE DISTRICT CHIEF OF MALANTOUEN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S PRISON

WARDENS. THE WARDENS WERE EXHORTED TO PRACTICE DISCIPLINE AND FIRMNESS, TO FOLLOW THE PRECEPTS OF THE TRAINING THEY HAD RECEIVED AT THE NATIONAL PRISONS TRAINING CENTER IN BUEA, AND TO REMEMBER THAT PRISONERS ARE HUMAN BEINGS.

4. PHILEMON YANG, THE VICE MINISTER OF TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION, ADDRESSED THE SIXTH GRADUATING CLASS OF THE BUEA PRISONS TRAINING CENTER ON APRIL 18. YANG REPORTED: "CONSCIOUS OF THE URGENT NEED ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP IN THE SERVICE" 25 NEW CHIEF WARDENS WERE ALREADY TRAINED AND EMPLOYED AND THAT THE PRESENT GRADUATING CLASS INCLUDED FIVE CHIEF WARDENS, 10 ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS, AND THREE PRISON ADMINISTRATORS. HE ADDED THAT THE MINISTRY HAD HAD TO FIRE SOME OFFICERS WHO WERE UNDISCIPLINED AND DID NOT SHOW PROFESSIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS. EVEN THOUGH THE CENTER HAD MADE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WITH ACADEMIC AND TECHNICAL TRAINING AVAILABLE TO "NEARLY ALL" PRISONS, SOME PERSONNEL HAD INEVITABLY BEEN ADMITTED WHO "LACK THE CALLING AND DEVOTION" REQUIRED TO MAKE GOOD PRISON OFFICERS. YANG THEN MENTIONED THE PUBLIC CONCERN FOR THE PLIGHT OF PRISONERS AND THEIR FEEDING. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S GOAL WAS TO REPLACE THE OLD COLONIAL PRISON SYSTEM WITH A NEW MODERN NATIONAL SYSTEM. "HE THEN CALLED UPON THE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, AFTER REVIEWING THE FINANCIAL INVOLVEMENTS OF RUNNING THE PRISONS, NOT TO BE CARRIED AWAY BY SLANTED OBSERVATIONS, MIS-REPRESENTATION, EXAGGERATION OF FACTS AND UNCONSTRUCTIVE PROPAGANDA" PLEADING THAT PRISON REFORM "PLACES AN ENORMOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BURDEN ON THE NATIONAL TREASURY." HE URGED THE GRADUATING CLASS TO SEEK THE HAPPINESS OF THEIR PRISONERS, WHO ARE "FELLOW CITIZENS IN A TEMPORARY SITUATION OF DISTRESS."

5. RECENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION WHICH ENDED JUNE 28 INDICATED GURC CONTINUING CONCERN WITH HUMAN RIGHTS. APPEAL PROCEDURES WERE AMENDED FROM TEN DAYS ON RECEIPT BY COURT REGISTRAR TO TEN DAYS FROM JUDGMENT DETERMINED BY DATE STAMP ON TELEGRAM OR LETTER POSTMARK. THIS CHANGE MADE BECAUSE IN PAST POST OFFICE OFTEN DELAYED DELIVERING NOTICE OF APPEAL TO COURT REGISTRARS UNTIL AFTER TEN DAY PERIOD DURING WHICH APPEAL COULD BE LODGED HAD EXPIRED, WITH RESULT THAT APPEAL AUTOMATICALLY DENIED.

6. REPORTEUR OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUDGET COMMITTEE IN JUNE 18 REPORT TO ASSEMBLY MADE REMARKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS DURING DISCUSSION OF VARIOUS MINISTRIES' BUDGET REQUESTS. ON TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION (PRISONS): "THEY (COMMITTEE MEMBERS) WANTED FOR EXAMPLE TO KNOW WHETHER THE FOOD SERVED AND RULES OF HYGIENE IN OUR PRISONS ARE UP TO REQUIRED MINIMUM STANDARDS. THE MINISTER OF STATE REPLIED THAT PRISON ADMINISTRATION WAS ITS NUMBER ONE PRIORITY AND THAT ITS GREATEST DIFFICULTY IN THIS FIELD IS THE GREAT NUMBER OF PRISONERS NOT LIABLE TO FORCED LABOR BUT WHO ARE HOWEVER

TAKEN CARE OF." WHILE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR, IT IS BLIEVED THAT PRISONERS LIABLE TO FORCED LABOR CAN BE USED PRODUCTIVELY ON PRISON FARMS TO EARN THEIR KEEP OR CAN BE HIRED OUT DURING THEDAY. THE PRIVATE CONTRACTOR MUST FURNISH FOOD AS WELL AS PAY FOR USE OF LABOR. HIRING OUT OF PRISON LABOR THUS RELIEVES MINISTRY OF BURDEN OF FURNISHING OOD OUT OF ITS OWN RESOURCES, WHICH IT MUST DO FOR THOSE PRISONERS NOT SUBJECT TO FORCES LABOR.

7. IN COMMENTING ON MINISTRY OF JUSTICE INCREASE IN BUDGET, RAPPORTEUR STATED: "SEVENTEEN POINT FIVE PER CENT INCREASE ONE OF HIGHEST IS IN KEEPING WITH THE URGENCY AND IMMENSITY OF THE DUTIES OF THIS MINISTRY AND THE PRICE THE PRESIDENT ATTACHES TO THE FACT THAT ALL CAMEROONIANS SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED THE FAIREST POSSIBLE JUSTICE UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. THERE ARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INNUMERABLE DIFFICULTIES IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF SUCH A MISSION. SHORTAGE OF STAFF AND EQUIPMENT, LACK OF PREMISES, ETC. THESE PROBLEMS LEAD TO THE REPEATED POSTPONEMENT OF HEARINGS, AND CONSEQUENTLY THE DELAY IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE WHICH WE ALL DEPLORE. DURING THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR, GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO TRY TO GIVE OUR JUSTICE A BASIS WHICH STRENGTHENS IMPARTIALITY BY SEPERATING THE BENCH FROM THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT IN EVERY COURT...MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN WITH THE LONG PERIODS OF DETENTION UNDER REMAND WHICH MAKES OUR PRISONS OVERCROWDED AND DEPRIVES CITIZENS WHO ARE ASSUMED INNOCENT OF THEIR FREEDOM. GOVERNMENT GAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIAL AND LEGAL DEPARTMENT, AND THE CHANCELLERY WOULD BE ON THE WATCH SO THAT DETENTION UNDER REMAND WHICH ARE DEEMED NECESSARY SHOULD NOT BE UNDULY LONG. FURTHERMORE, GOVERNMENT SAID APPLICATIONS FOR A TEMPORARY RELEASE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN STUDIED AND ARE OFTEN GRANTED EVEN WITHOUT BAIL." IN ADDITION, RAPPORTEUR INDICATED THAT JUSTICE MINISTRY INTENDED INCREASE PERSONNEL AT COURTS, RECRUIT ADDITIONAL REGISTRARS AND BUILD MORE COURT HOUSES.

8. DETAILED COMMENTS REFTEL A BEING SENT SEPARATELY AFTER MEETING SCHEDULED LATER TODAY WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL PRESIDENCY IN ATTEMPT OBTAIN UPDATE ON DETENTIONS. MITHOEFER

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